DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
INNER HARBOR NAVIGATION CANAL LOCK REPLACEMENT PROJECT
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT

ABSTRACT. The existing Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock was completed in 1923; is 640 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 31.5 feet deep; and connects the Mississippi River with the IHNC, Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) and Mississippi River – Gulf Outlet. Because of maintenance issues and its relatively small size, the IHNC Lock is subject to closures and congestion, leading to long delays for waterborne traffic. A total of eight sites for a new lock have been evaluated through planning efforts and public involvement beginning in 1960. A 1997 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared and evaluated two action plans in detail. In 2007, the Federal District Court, Eastern New Orleans District enjoined the project and required the preparation of a Supplemental EIS to describe changes in existing conditions after Hurricane Katrina and to analyze impacts from the recommended plan and alternatives on these existing conditions. The 1997 EIS Plan, and two revised lock replacement plans, the Cast-in-Place [CIP] and Float-in-Place [FIP] plans as well as a No-build/Deauthorization Plan are evaluated. The 1997 EIS Plan would replace the existing lock with a new 110-foot wide, 1,200-foot long and 36-foot deep lock in the IHNC north of the Claiborne Avenue Bridge and extend Mississippi River floodwalls and levees from the existing lock to the new lock location. The 1997 EIS Plan includes the replacement of the existing St. Claude Avenue Bridge with a low-level double-bascule bridge and modifications to the North Claiborne Avenue Bridge to make it compatible with a new lock. The 1997 EIS Plan would construct lock monoliths at a graving site and dispose of material dredged during lock construction.

The lock design and location, and bridge modifications in the CIP Plan would be similar to the 1997 Plan, except the CIP Plan would construct seven lock monoliths founded on piles within a cellular sheet pile cofferdam, instead of floating lock monoliths to the new lock site. The FIP Plan, which is the recommended plan, is very similar to the 1997 EIS Plan. The FIP Plan requires two separate construction locations, the graving site and new lock site. The graving site would allow for lock module construction in dry conditions. Lock modules would be floated to the lock construction site in the IHNC. Additional evaluation has further refined the location and design of the confined disposal facility for contaminated dredged material, the location and size of the graving site, and the methods for disposal of all dredged material. Although project modifications have been made to minimize socioeconomic and noise impacts and alterations to traffic patterns during the lock and bridge construction, short-term adverse impacts are anticipated to housing, business and industrial activity, community services, tax revenues, and vehicle transportation. Additionally, long-term adverse impacts would occur on aesthetics and recreational resources from the IHNC Lock Replacement project due to the modification of levees and floodwalls. Although the demographics of nearby neighborhoods has changed dramatically due to Hurricane Katrina, a community impact mitigation plan was implemented as part of the 1997 EIS Plan and would continue to fund numerous projects to avoid, minimize and compensate for adverse impacts to socioeconomic resources in the nearby neighborhoods.

Date: November 24, 2008

Please send your comments to the District Engineer by the date stamped above. For further information please contact Mr. Richard Boe, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267. Telephone (504) 862-1505.